

Case Study: State of Minnesota

When former professional wrestler Jesse “The Body” Ventura was elected governor of Minnesota, “The Land of the 10,000 Lakes” became known for more than its outdoor attractions. Ventura shifted the nation’s focus from Minnesota’s natural wonders to the spectacle at the state house. But with the media spotlight, Ventura also brought what he calls budget principles, one of which—“Be fiscally conservative and prudent. Never forget it’s the people’s money.”—Deb Stafford is taking to heart.

Stafford, a business continuation consultant for the state, and her team assist the 13 state agencies in building and maintaining their continuity plans. The Department of Administration Technologies Bureau, of which Stafford is a part, is the official mainframe and telecommunications provider for the state.

The bureau also provides access to continuity planning software and recently purchased and implemented LDRPS Web Server Version.

“The web product is saving us a substantial amount of money, and that’s important to me because it’s my money,” Stafford says. Although she hasn’t calculat-

ed the exact savings, Stafford estimates the sum at well over \$1 million. “Rather than using a separate software package for each state agency, they can all use the Web Server product. It’s much like business units or locations within a corporation, if you buy one product for all to use instead of letting each choose its own package, the savings is substantial.” Additionally, Stafford says the drastic reduction in desktop support due to the elimination of end-user workstation set-ups has realized “tremendous savings.”



Governor Jesse Ventura

AP/Wide World Photos

Apart from saving money, LDRPS Web Server is facilitating a cultural change among the state agencies. “It is very rare for all state agencies to work together on a project,” Stafford says. “There

may be the feeling of loss of control. But with Web Server, we’re all quite proud that we’re attempting to work together on this.” While it is not mandated that all agencies use LDRPS Web Server, Stafford is confident that the majority—if the not entirety—will, thanks, in part, to Ventura.

According to Stafford, an “expansive” executive order, which would mandate all state agencies to have continuity and recovery plans in place, is expected to be presented to Ventura for approval.

Currently, agencies are only required to substantiate “how they would support a community-wide disaster,” Stafford says. The new legislation would require them to “have documentation that explains how they themselves are going to recover.”

Faced with that mandate, it’s a “no brainer for the agencies to turn to us,” Stafford says. “We’re in the process of building an internal web site with a link to the software, a place for users to suggest software enhancements and access planning facts and links to other planning sites that they might find useful.” Y2K concerns have already driven many of the agencies to Stafford’s group for help. “Since Y2K became an issue, I’ve gotten an increase in requests for contingency planning software. We are using BIA Professional and Y2K Fred. It’s been going really well. They are relatively new at this, and they really like that the software is easy to use and walks them through things.”

Convenience and uniformity help make the case for all agencies to use Web Server, she says. “If we all use the same software, we will have a standard format for our plans. Think of how useful that would be. If each agency is using the same product, I can generate reports on resource needs across agencies instead of going out to collect that information. We could compare recovery time frames across the state in order to prioritize recovery. We could better utilize internal resources for recovery centers; if I’ve got to find space for 50 people in 24 hours, I can look at all statewide internal resources. And if the governor needed a report on recovery plans in an emergency, I could just roll them up.”

For Stafford, another key benefit is being able to access Web Server from anywhere. “It’s nice to be able to have that access and not to have to carry a bunch of documents with you,” she says. “I have to travel to a lot of outer state offices.” That’s no small task in Minnesota; “The Land of the 10,000 Lakes” is also 406 miles long.



Continuity plans protect Minnesota from Minneapolis to Mugwump Lake.